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AUTHOR Hanna, Glenda
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses ways to link components of the adventure education and environmental education systems in Alberta, Canada. The province of Alberta has developed an Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies which reflects an integrated, experiential approach to connect the personal needs of adolescent youth to the society of which they are becoming a part. The course of studies includes three progressive levels; foundations, exploration, and empowerment. The foundations level includes elements in personal and group development and environmental knowledge and skills. At the exploration level students apply their learning to a variety of situations and investigations. At the empowerment level, students form commitments to personal, social, and environmental harmony. To help link teacher comfort and competence with the demands of the new Environmental and Outdoor Education course of studies, the University of Alberta developed the Environmental and Outdoor Education Leadership School. The school offers undergraduate and graduate courses in an experiential manner with outdoor explorations. Innovative approaches are necessary to link adventure and environmental education. The paper lists examples of teaching units emphasizing a tneme, a metaphor, or a cognitive activity. The examples categorize activities into the foundation, exploration, and empowerment levels. (KS)

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BRIDGING THE GAP: LINKING ADVENTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Glenda Hanna, Ph.D.

Department of Physical Education and Sport Studies
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

A bridge is a structure built over a ravine, stream, river, etc. which provides a way across for people. It is something that provides a connection, contact, or transition. A bridge may be a physical structure, or may take oneof many abstract forms.

In this workshop, the presenter will discuss examples of three different bridges linking components of the adventure/environmental education system. First, a new but very successful Junior High School program which attempts to bridge the needs of adolescents with those of society will be described. Second, a teacher preparation program designed to help teachers bridge the gap between their comfort and competence in delivering adventure and environmental content and process, and the curricular demands of the new Junior High School Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies will be presented. And finally, the majority of the workshop will focus on bridging the relationship between Adventure Education and Environmental Education. How do they connect in a single course of studies? What are some ways teachers can use themes, metaphors and activities to link the two components into a holistic program? These and other relevant questions will be addressed.

BRIDGE 1: LINKING ADOLESCENT AND SOCIETAL NEEDS

Adolescents have a number of unique needs related to personal, interpersonal and societal development. At the same time, society counts on the education system to prepare its youth to make good decisions and take responsible positions in the future. Nowhere is the need for good decision making and commitment more important than in the array of decisions which relate to human effects on the environment.

Adolescents need to establish:

- a personal identity, sense of self and perceptions of competence
- new relationships with peers and others, and a sense of social belonging
- a personal relationship with the world through application of newfound kr. wledge, skills and values in a variety of situations

Society increasingly needs citizens who:

- understand basic ecological processes and factors needed for balance on the earth
- are aware of the effects of humankind on the environment, recognizing that these effects are not always immediate or predictable in space and time
- are capable of making informed individual and group decisions and are motivated to act as responsible citizens of the planet

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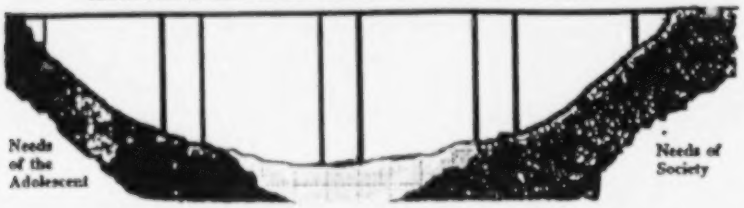

Figure 1: Bridging the gap between the needs of adolescents and of society: The Alberta Junior High School Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies

Bridge Linking Adolescent and Societal Needs: Alberta Junior High School Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies

The province of Alberta has developed an Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies which reflects an integrated, experiential approach to connecting the personal needs of adolescent youth and the society they are becoming a part of (see Figure 1). The program attempts to help adolescents in their quest for personal identity and wholeness by providing a framework for meeting immediate needs as well as a process for lifelong learning. The Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies endeavors to help students develop a personal relationship with the earth by providing opportunities to experience and study environments in a variety of urban, rural and natural settings. Progression in program elements allows students to move from awareness, through conceptual understanding, and on to action orientation. This includes an emphasis on the ways and means of achieving self and environmental realization through positive personal and environmental change.

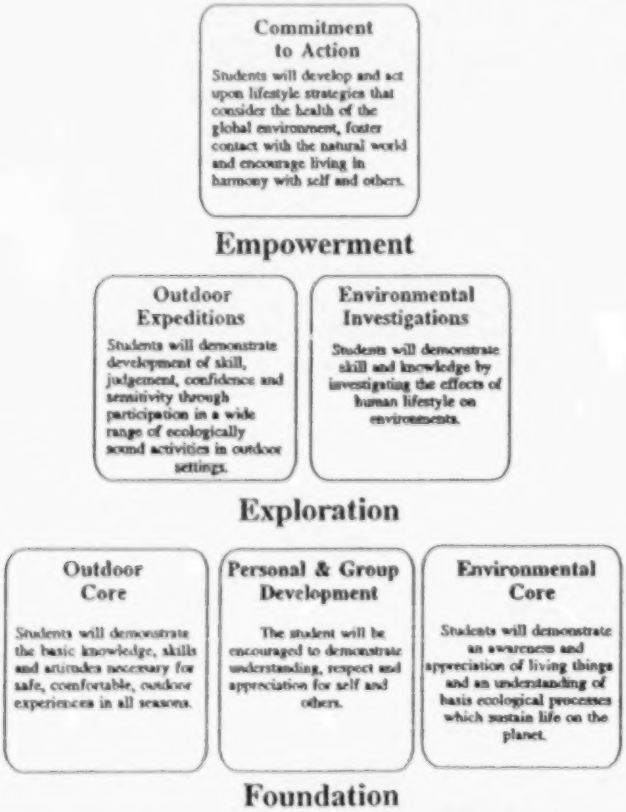
Commitment to Action
Students will develop and act upon lifestyle strategies that consider the health of the global environment, foster contact with the natural world and encourage living in harmony with self and others.
Empowerment
Outdoor Expeditions
Students will demonstrate development of skill, judgement, confidence and sensitivity through participation in a wide range of ecologically sound activities in outdoor settings.
Environmental Investigations
Students will demonstrate skill and knowledge by investigating the effects of human lifestyle on environments.
Exploration
Outdoor Core
Students will demonstrate the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for safe, comfortable, outdoor experiences in all seasons.
Personal & Group Development
The student will be encouraged to demonstrate understanding, respect and appreciation for self and others.
Environmental Core
Students will demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of living things and an understanding of basic ecological processes which sustain life on the planet.
Foundation

Figure 2: Key elements of the Alberta Junior High School Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies

As Figure 2 illustrates, the Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies includes three progressive levels; foundations, exploration and empowerment. The foundations level introduces three components or strands which are carried on at the higher levels. These include core elements in outdoor, personal and group development and environmental knowledges and skills. At the exploration level, students apply their learning from the foundations core elements to a variety of situations and investigations, gaining understanding and confidence as they do so. Finally, at the empowerment level, students form commitments to personal, social and environmental harmony.

BRIDGE 2: LINKING TEACHER COMFORT AND COMPETENCE WITH THE DEMANDS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION COURSE OF STUDIES

A new course of studies in Environmental and Outdoor Education suggests students will be taught content and processes aimed at learning such diverse curricular elements as outdoor living and travel skills, personal and interpersonal development, and environmental science and skills. This type of holistic program is as essential in developing the potential of our youth, as it is difficult for any single individual to deliver comfortably and capably. Most Outdoor Education teachers arrive at their post via a specialization in Physical Education or Environmental Science. A background in experiential teaching and learning objectives and methods cannot be assumed, nor can personal extensive experience in the natural environment. While obviously a good time to promote team teaching, alas, this is not always a pragmatic option. Recognizing the new and diverse demands the Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies is placing on Junior High School teachers across the province, a need for pre- and inservice training in the area became readily apparent.

Bridge Linking Curricular Demands and Teacher Comfort/Competence: University of Alberta Environmental and Outdoor Education Leadership School

To begin to meet the challenge described, the presenter initiated meetings with the partners involved in the delivery of Environmental and Outdoor Education in the province (e.g., the boards of education, education consultants, teachers association (Environmental and Outdoor Education Council), provincial government, Environmental Education societies, and other departments on campus). Tremendous support for the concept of a university credit offering, especially at the post-graduate level, was experienced and this positive energy provided the impetus for the development of the University of Alberta's Environmental and Outdoor Education Leadership School. The Department already had a very active Masters and Ph.D. program in Outdoor Education and Recreation, and this new summer component was seen to provide an additional opportunity for others to initiate graduate studies in the area.

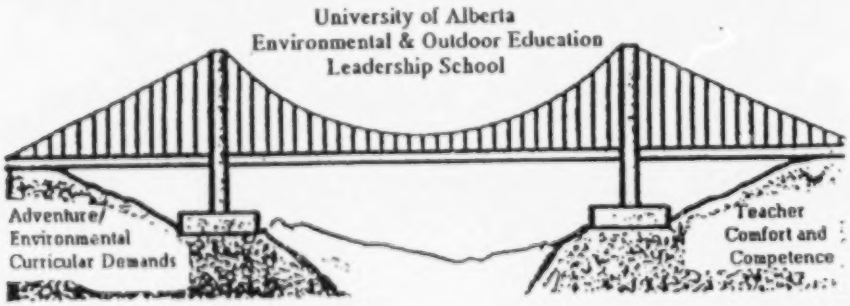

Figure 3: Bridging the gap between the comfort and competence of teachers and the curricular demands of the new Environmental and Outdoor Education Junior High School Course of Studies: the University of Alberta Environmental and Outdoor Education Leadership School

The school was piloted the summer of 1991 and operated with a full complement of ten students and two instructors. The program ran for three weeks over the month of July and had six course units of weight associated, taken at the graduate or senior undergraduate level. The two courses included in the program were Adventure Education Leadership and Outdoor Environmental Leadership. The school offered these courses in an experiential manner and integration of outdoor explorations, personal and interpersonal growth, and environmental investigations was enhanced over a five-day mountain biking/hiking trip in Banff National Park.

Evaluation research conducted has suggested a very high level of personal and professional growth in the participants, and satisfaction with the program and its instruction. Ongoing research is being conducted by one graduate student to determine if participation in the Environmental and Outdoor Education Leadership School was actually of benefit to teachers with respect to their ability to overcome barriers to implementation of the Junior High School Course of Studies.

> I've never worked so hard, learned so much
> and laughed so often in my whole life.
>
> Alison Collins,
> Junior/Senior High Teacher and
> Graduate of the Program, 1991

BRIDGE 3: LINKING ADVENTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Whether a single individual is teaching or a team of two or more people are cooperating in one school to deliver a course of studies in Environmental and Outdoor Education, challenges arise in providing connections, linkages and transitions between the program's components to ensure that a holistic perspective is maintained and instructional flow ensured. Such bridge building requires concerted creative thinking and a spirit of adventure to try new ideas. Innovative approaches may include the use of themes, metaphors and cognitive, affective or psychomotor activities. Examples of units emphasizing a theme, a metaphor and a cognitive activity follow. There are many, many more concepts and activities which could be incorporated into each of the three units introduced here. The intent is merely to illustrate the idea of each rather than provide a definitive lesson plan.

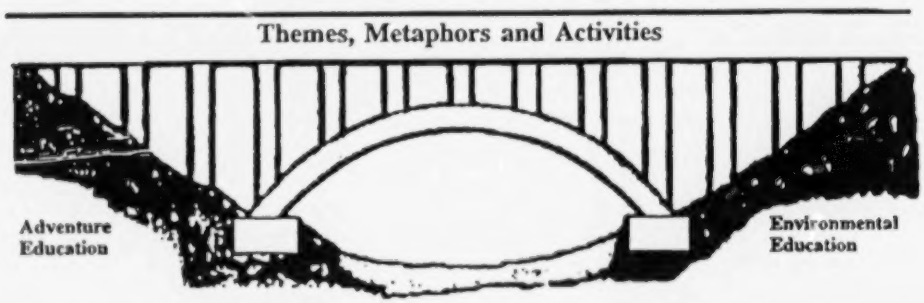

Figure 4: Bridging the gap between Adventure and Environmental Education: Themes, Metaphors and Activities

EXAMPLE 1

THEME - The River

ADVENTURE CONCEPTS/ACTIVITIES

Foundation - do a boating safety course
Exploration - canoe the local river/stream through town, visiting historic sites along the way
Empowerment - have the class plan, carry out and debrief a multi-day canoe expedition

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPTS/ACTIVITIES

Foundation - do acclimatization sensory excercises along the local river/stream and write a class poem on the outcomes
Exploration - do water quality monitoring along the river/stream through town
Empowerment - have each student write a personal action contract to reduce one impact they currently have on the quantity/quality of water in the local river/stream

EXAMPLE 2

METAPHOR - "All my life's a circle"

ADVENTURE CONCEPTS/ACTIVITIES

Foundation - learn and practice bicycle maintenance, repair and safety skills
Exploration - cycle around an environmental orienteering course where each control asks questions about things in nature that also cycle (e.g. water, nutrients, earth's rotation, the seasons, etc.)
Empowerment - as a class plan, carry out and debrief a multiday cycle tour

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPTS/ACTIVITIES

Foundation - build a class model of the water cycle as it works in the local watershed
Exploration - discuss cybernetic relationships (self regulating, cyclical; e.g. regional hare/coyote populations) and the effects of one or more human activities (e.g. predator control programs) on the natural regime
Empowerment - study cycle commuting rates and patterns in the city and then meet with local transportation planners to share ideas concerning increased support for cycle commuting (e.g. bike paths and routes, road maintenance, etc.)

EXAMPLE 3

ACTIVITY - Native poetry reading - have the class read one or more selected poems about a traditional native way of life and its spiritual essence and then brainstorm a list of activities those people would have practiced (e.g. subsistence skills, rituals, etc.)

ADVENTURE CONCEPTS/ACTIVITIES

Foundation - learn to care for, sharpen and safely use a knife
Exploration - build and use a wilderness steambath
Empowerment - have the class "become" a tribe for a few days (e.g. live in tee-pees, forage for food, simulate ritual ceremonies, etc.)

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPTS/ACTIVITIES

Foundation - learn how the selected natives lived (e.g. ethnobotanical plant uses, social roles and responsibilities, etc.)

Exploration - study the effects of European explorers, traders and settlers on the traditional way of life

EMPOWERMENT - visit a local band with an unresolved land claim issue.

Study this and other positions in relation to other regional, national and international aboriginal land claims and write a class brief or letter to the editor describing the situation and proposed solutions identified by the class.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this session, the presenter illustrated examples of three types of bridges. The first involved the development and implementation of a new Junior High School Course of Studies in Environmental and Outdoor Education, designed to help adolescents meet their own needs and those of the society they are a part of. The second bridge was built to help teachers deliver the new Course of Studies capably and with confidence. The university senior undergraduate/graduate program which was developed to meet this need also serves to meet the needs of teachers and other outdoor professionals who wish to pursue post-graduate studies in this area. Finally, the difficult task of integrating adventure and environmental content and process in a single program was addressed. A variety of adventure-environment bridge examples were provided, and workshop participants will undoubtedly have built even more over the course of the session!